



The Sermon

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Colossians 1:21-23

"Four Truths for Christian Steadfastness"

May 14, 2023

TRANSCRIPT

Colossians 1:21-23 is our text this morning. I will read it, and then we will dive in. Colossians 1 in the New Testament, Colossians 1:21-23, picking up where Dr. Lawson left off.

"And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister." Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, I pray that now as we turn to Your Word, You will bless us. Open our eyes to behold wondrous things. Strengthen Your people, strengthen Your saints. Draw those to faith who do not know Christ. We ask a rich blessing upon this time, in Jesus name. Amen. [End]

I don't know if you've had the experience of laughing gas, as they call it. You'll see viral videos about this sometimes. About 12 years ago, 13 years ago, I tore my Achilles tendon playing basketball, and so I had surgery on my Achilles tendon. And something went a little wrong in this surgery with the laughing gas. Nothing horrible, don't freak out. But basically, I was semi-conscious, and I repeated a single sentence for the entirety of the

surgery. I said something to the doctors like, "I just hope this is not inconveniencing you." I said it hundreds of times in a row. I just kept repeating it to the doctors. The nurse told me later, like, "You did not stop saying that sentence the entire time." I had no recollection of it. So it could have gone viral if anybody had been so unkind.

You'll see videos about this. You've seen, probably many of you, the viral video of the little kid, little boy who got his wisdom teeth out, and he is still very much feeling the effect. This is powerful stuff. And he says to his parents in the back of the van, "Is this real life?" He's perceiving the world and he's not certain it's real or a simulation. And so he's definitely having a kind of similar experience to me. In that moment when you watch that kind of thing or when you slip out of consciousness, you can lose sense of who you are entirely, you don't even know your name.

I saw another video that an unnamed family member showed me this past week, where this woman was literally hearing her first and last name on laughing gas, and she was like, "That's a terrible name," and it was her name. So just be careful. If you get nothing else out of the sermon, be careful with laughing gas, okay. That's all I have to say. Have a good Sunday.

You can lose sight of who you are in these experiences. In our passage this morning, Colossians 1, the apostle Paul is helping an entire church remember who they are in Christ. In fact, we're going to see four truths this morning about the Colossian church, and our first truth is going to center in who they were; and this applies to us as believers as well.

Our first truth to cover of four from our passage is this: "You were alienated." That's our past. You and I were alienated from God. We see that in verse 21, if you'll read there with me: "And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds." In our sin the apostle Paul says here, "We once were alienated or separated in a hostile condition from God." That's where the unbeliever is. That's where every unbeliever is in our

natural state. No one has to coach us there, no one has to help us be hostile to God, hostility comes naturally.

And we did not think God's thoughts. In fact, we were hostile in our mind, Paul says. You see that there, that phrase, "hostile in mind," hostility, *echthros* in the Greek, spread all through our minds, such that even though we naturally know there is a God, every person does, there are no true atheists, there are no genuine atheists out there. There are people who say they are. "Everyone" - Romans 1 - "knows there is God, everyone suppresses that truth in unrighteousness." That is our natural state. Our very mind was hostile to God. We did not want to think God's thoughts after Him. Alienation, one commentator says, was not simply a passive distance from God, but an active hostility toward Him.

So if you're not a Christian this morning, if you've come into this service, welcome, we're so glad you're here. The news about your mind and your heart is pretty dire; it's that you're in hostility to God, and you don't love God. And you don't, furthermore, do what is right; we, by nature, do evil deeds, Paul says. Evil is in our mind, and evil comes out of us. That's why you turn on the headlines. That's why you fire up your Web page, your social media and you see terrible things happening all throughout our world. It is because of this: it is because of what Paul says about the Colossians. They were alienated from God, separated from God by Adam's fall, and thus, they were hostile in mind.

Have you tried to share the gospel recently with an unbeliever, Christian? Not every engagement goes this way, but some of them do where you try to share the gospel. And what is the experience? Hostility, yes? Just open, "I do not want that."

I remember sharing the gospel, trying to, with a beloved family member, my grandfather before he died, and I could barely get words about God and the gospel out of my mouth, and he would just shut the conversation down. I couldn't even - you know, you should be a witness. It's part of why we have to be careful with burdening Christians in evangelism. We should

evangelize out of the overflow of grace. We're not God. I had no jujitsu, no tricks to make my grandfather listen to the gospel or pay attention. I couldn't even get the conversation to spiritual things.

That's how much hostility – some of you know this. This is where family members are: friends, co-workers, loved ones. This may be where you are this morning. Know this: there is no solution for this hostility and this alienation, this separation from God outside of God's own work. There's no way around this. There's no way to stop evil deeds outside of divine things. You cannot stop evil with self-help. You can buy every therapy book at Barnes Noble or on Amazon; that is not going to stop evil. You cannot stop evil with activism, with politics. That's very common among the younger generation, right? "We're going to be the generation, guys, to change the world. We're going to do it." Every other generation has tried and failed. "We're going to try it. We can get this done."

You can't stop evil with activism. You cannot eradicate evil from the world with political activism. You can't stop evil with brute force. You could have a dictator, you could have a Christian prince over America. Guess what; you can't stop evil. You cannot stop evil with good feelings: "Let's just be nice. Guys, let's just be nice. Can we just be nice? Be nice. Use inside voices, and evil will go away." No, evil won't go away, I'm sorry. You can't stop evil with a Christian government. I don't mean to be the bearer of the bad news here, but there is only one force that can overcome evil, and that leads to our second truth.

Our second truth this morning as a Christian: "You are reconciled. You are reconciled." This is your present as a Christian. This is right now as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The only way out of our evil condition, not just the evil of the world, the evil internal to us, is spelled out in the first half of verse 22: "He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death." Ha-ha, there it is. The only way to overcome the estrangement and separation between us and God is one means and one means only: it is the death of Jesus Christ. That is the only force powerful enough to overcome the body of sin that is in us.

Sin in the New Testament is not represented as a little bitty cluster of mistakes. Sin in the New Testament is represented as a power, as a monster, if you will. It is a menacing force. The reason you say hurtful words to those you love, the reason you're tempted to lie, the reason you're tempted to covet, the reason you're tempted to lust, on and on it goes, is not because there's a little bitty capacity in you to do occasionally a little bitty mistake. That's how Americans commonly think about their sin. No, it's that there's a monstrous power in us by nature that manifests evil in all sorts of ways.

The only way to overcome it has a name. The name is Jesus, that's it; and specifically, the death of Jesus. The life of Jesus matters tremendously. Jesus fulfilled all righteousness in His godly life. He perfectly kept the law. He was faithful where Israel in the Old Testament was unfaithful. He shows us the way to worship God at all times, comprehensively, purely, and perfectly. His life stored up righteousness that is credited to our account when we trust Christ by faith. And yet, if there is no death of Jesus, it's all for nothing. We need the substitutionary death of Jesus under law for our sins.

That death, Jesus dying in our place on the cross, taking our death sentence that we deserve for our sin for us, that death, Paul teaches here, beautiful word, "reconciles," reconciles us to God. Reconciles means heals, closes the gap, brings peace, not a temporary peace. The reconciliation that Jesus has offered by His death is not the first little taste of salvation to get you started, and then you, having had salvation begun for you by the grace of God, you complete the deal: "You've got to close this out, believer. You've got to have like a whole lot of devotions steady and consistent to get saved. You've got to have a lot of prayer time to make this happen. Believer, you've got to have a ton of church service if you're getting to glory."

We are not functional Catholics. Salvation is by grace. Sanctification is by grace. It's all of grace. Every minute you live as a believer is by grace. Every minute you live, Christian, you have perfect, total peace with God. You are not at war with your God. You are not estranged from God. God is not angry at you. God is not raging at you, "Get it together. Figure it out." No, God loves you. God loves you.

Sometimes Christians have the hardest time with the greatest truths. I don't know why. It's like feeding rock into a blender. You're like, "Oh, I got some great truth. Well, this is going to really encourage people." It's like, "I don't want that encouragement, I want some law. I want you to tell me what to do. Stop giving me the namby-pamby, squishy stuff. Tell me what to do."

No, God wants to give you waves of encouragement by His grace. God wants you to hear that you are now – you see that word there, verse 22: "You are now reconciled." There is no war between you and God. You are at peace with the Sovereign of the universe. You're at peace. Is your life characterized by peace? You're at rest from your works. Jesus has taken, listen to me, the 300-pound burden from your shoulders and He has transferred it to His shoulders. Jesus has strong shoulders. Jesus can bear it. Jesus went to Calvary so that you would be completely saved, completely reconciled to your God. You would have perfect peace with your God.

This again, is all, in the English, "by His death." In the Greek, *thanatoó*, "through His death." Someone says, "Oh you're a Christian? You go to Trinity Bible? That's very cool, I've heard some good things about that. I'm a Christian, too. I love Jesus." And you say, not angrily, not burning their doors down; but you say, "Which Jesus? Who's your Jesus? Let's just talk about that. Really and truly, who is your Jesus?" This is a great evangelistic question. This is my contribution to evangelism, a two-word question – it's really not that great of a question: "Which Jesus?" Just have that conversation with a co-worker, with a neighbor, with a friend. You would be shocked at what might follow at the conversation that might develop.

We as Christians, we love unbelievers. There's this new method now going out online of Christians who have who evangelize by screaming at people. I'm against sidewalk evangelism or something like that, but we don't go and scream at people to evangelize them. We go and try to talk to them. We go and try to reason with people, persuade them in love. If your evangelism is not done in love, it's not really biblical evangelism. We are all about reaching out to people who need rescue, and we are presenting them with a Jesus who makes reconciliation, *Dia thanatoó*, through death. That's the

only Jesus there is. That's the only true Jesus there is I mean. He's the one who brings sinners to Himself, but through His substitutionary death, by dying for us.

Reconciliation is glorious. Reconciliation is a glory that never ends for the Christian. You can find earthly examples of reconciliation, and they themselves will take your breath away. I heard recently a story from Prison Fellowship about a man named Joe Avila who, tragically, driving drunk, killed a young woman named Amy Wall. It was about 30 years ago. Joe killed Amy. And Joe checked himself into a sobriety program. God brought people around Joe who preached the gospel to Joe. Joe had never heard about forgiveness of sins, never heard about it. Didn't know - listen to me - didn't know his sins, all of them, could be totally forgiven.

Hey, that's the greatest miracle there is. Like people talking in different languages, crazy things happening. There's wild stuff that can happen in Scripture, for example. But fundamentally, the greatest miracle on this earth is perfect forgiveness of sins by God. It's a well that never runs dry.

Joe heard about this, and it started affecting him and changing him; and before his trial for drunk driving - praise God in common grace terms, for a system of law; praise God for courts, trials, police, authorities - just before Easter 1993 Joe entered his courthouse and changed his plea. He change the plea to guilty. He no longer, in other words, was pretending he was not guilty. Is there not a spiritual connection there for all of us? Does not the human heart plead, "Not guilty," before God? Do we not present ourselves, "Oh no, I'm not a sinner"? When you change the plea before God to guilty, "I am guilty," that is when forgiveness flows.

That's what happened with Joe. He, behind bars, served in the hospice at the prison. He shared the gospel. He was born again. He'd become born again. But there was more to come. Through a variety of circumstances, Amy's brother Derek reached out to Joe, heard that his life was changing. The two met together, and Joe said to the brother of the woman he killed these

words, "I'm really sorry for what I've done. I hope that someday you can forgive me." And Derek, a Christian, forgave him.

But it doesn't end there either. Later another phone call came to Joe, and the father of the girl Joe killed reached out to Joe. Rick and the two of them met and they reconciled; and at a later event, Rick the father of the woman killed by a drunk driver, standing before him, hugged Joe and said, "I love you. I love you, Joe." And here is what Joe, this drunk driver, said years later about Rick: "I killed his daughter, and he gave me a hug and said, 'I love you.' And that is a true testament to the miracle of reconciliation and why Christ died on the cross."

Friends, this is the miracle the world needs: forgiveness. This is what the church exists to offer. This is what we are in business for. We are in business to offer sinners just like us, perfect, pure, total forgiveness of sin. This all flows from the reconciling work of Christ. This is what Christ has done at an even greater than human forgiveness. There is divine forgiveness.

Even if you think back in your past and you think, "Man, I wish I could make some things right. I wish I could go back and heal that relationship." You may not have had a wonderful relationship with your mother or your father. This may not, in natural terms, be an easy day for you. That's true of some. There may be other real pain that you have with regard to your life; and honestly, it doesn't all resolve in this life. But I have incredibly good news for you. Whatever things look like on earth – with that estranged child, that estranged father, mother, sister, friend, whatever it may be, spouse – with God, there is total reconciliation.

Your God has drawn near to you. The heavenly Father has not merely left the porch light on, the heavenly Father has run toward you through His Son, through the death of His Son. And if you have faith in Jesus Christ, if you trust in the blood of Christ, if you believe that Jesus rose from the dead, if you confess your sin and repent of your sin – that just means turn from it

and cry out to Christ – you will have perfect peace with God, "All the old washes away, all things become new in Christ," 2 Corinthians 5:17.

If you are a believer, then God is not estranged from you. You are reconciled to God. You relate to God as a beloved child. You are a chosen trophy. You are an object of eternal love. There is no breach now between you and the Father. The cross of Christ has brought perfect peace. And now you are indwelled by the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is changing you from one degree of glory to another, to look more and more and more like Jesus Christ.

This is happening for every Christian in here. This is the work of God in you; it will happen. God loves you. God cares for you. God is walking through the valley with you. Are you in a valley right now? Some of you are in a valley. Some of you are in a deep valley. If you are a believer, the Lord Jesus Christ is right with you; and He is tender, He is loving, He cares for you, He's gracious.

But the good news does not stop there, friends. Third truth. Our third truth this morning is about our future: "You will be blameless. You will be blameless." God has your future covered, every minute. Every minute is wrapped in divine grace. Believer, there's not a minute coming that is a maverick minute where God was trying to get that one for His glory, but, "Sorry, He missed it, and you're going to have to figure it out, you're going to have to live that day in your own strength. Sorry, that month there's a shortage. There's an American supply chain shortage of grace; and I'm sorry, you're going to have to live this life in your own strength. There's not really going to be forgiveness of sin offered in the month of August, okay. Just need to announce this. You just get through it yourself. Do a bunch of good works, okay. Rejustify yourself when you unjustify yourself, and we'll see you at the finish line, okay." No! Lies. Lies.

Verse 22b, second half, "in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him." That is the purpose of the cross of Christ. It's

ultimately to present you before God the Father on the last day, holy, unblemished, and blameless – holy, unblemished, and blameless.

You need to understand, this is what you now are in the sight of God. This is not who you and I are in our experience, but this is how God sees you in Christ; and on the last day, this is who you actually will be. Christ on the last day will swear by you. He will testify to you. He will go in some form that blows all our categories before God the Father in His perfect radiance. And you might be tempted to think you are condemned before this perfectly holy God. But there will be a friend for you. There is a Savior who will step forward and say, "He's mine, she's mine. My blood covers all her sin. My blood presents Him unblemished."

Your Savior's going to do that for you, the Bible is telling you. It's not saying, "Christ hopes to do this, Christ has plans to do this. Management is going to try to bring this one through." Christ is going to present you perfectly holy before God. And so the day that would be your undoing in your sin is going to be the day of your greatest joy. Your greatest days, believer, are all ahead of you. They're all ahead of you.

May I encourage you: stop living in the past in terms of dreading the past, in terms of endlessly cycling back through it. There are things there that are painful. There are things that need healing, and there's a place for working through that, of course. But you can't live there, you've got to live with your eyes focused on what is coming. You've got to remember your future – strange phrase.

You've got to remember your future, Christian. You've got to actively stop looking down at this world, and you've got to lift your eyes, and you've got to see what Christ is now doing and is going to bring to completion, and you've got to see that it's better than anything this world can offer you here. It's better than anything Dallas and success in Dallas, or any other place in Texas, or any other place in America, or any other place in the world can offer you. If you're a Christian, you have the best God can give. And you're

going to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant," on the last day. God is going to do this.

Have you heard about SERE training: survival, evasion, resistance, and escape. It's Special Forces training in the US military. Is anyone here a Special Forces operator? I guess you can't tell us, because then you'd have to kill us, frankly, let's just be honest. Okay. Please, please don't kill us, it's Mother's Day, okay.

SERE training is like this. There's no food offered after a certain point. You eat whatever you forage. You're dropped in a New England forest. I'm from Maine, so I get this. You're dropped in a New England forest in January; have fun with that one. So you just forage your food, find what shelter you can. It's that thing with men where it sounds kind of awesome and also sounds terrible, "Okay, yeah."

So SERE training is you getting yourself out of the forest by your own wits. This is not what Christian sanctification is. Christian sanctification is provided by God. Consider the witness of 2 Corinthians 9:8, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that, having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." Do you know this verse is in your Bible? God is the one who makes grace abound to you, such that you are, as I said earlier, not just saved by grace, but sanctified by grace.

Christian, you have, in spiritual terms, to fight sin, to pass through suffering, to endure to the end, to withstand the attacks of the devil. You have all sufficiency in all things at all times, such as you can abound in every good work. This is not a word of condemnation to you, this is a word of profound blessing and encouragement. Don't blend the rocks, okay, and refuse the encouragement. Be encouraged.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 says much the same thing, the promise of the new covenant: "I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within

you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and be careful to obey My rules." Christians miss some of what I just read commonly. "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes."

Is this how you think about your growth in godliness? I think a lot of times we think God gets us saved, yes, right? He does that, and we grow ourselves in godliness. Wrong. God gets us saved, and God causes us to walk in His statutes and obey His rules. This is not bad news, this is impossibly good news. Your will is involved, your mind is involved, your heart is involved. You need to wake up in the morning or do your things at night, if you're a night owl or something like that. You need to labor and strive for holiness. You need to kill sin. You need to have good brothers and sisters around you. You need to serve your church. All the duties and disciplines of grace apply, we're not canceling them.

Furthermore, just because grace abounds does not mean that sin should abound, right, Romans 6:1. Nonetheless, don't mute what the Bible is shouting at you in love. God is the one who will cause you to walk in His statutes. Everybody just collectively exhale. It's going to be okay. We're going to make it through this. I don't know what's coming for America. I don't know what's coming for our communities. That's not ultimately our focus. Our focus is God and His goodness. God's going to get us all home. No one's being left behind. No one's going to have to forage for themselves, in terms of grace, and figure out, "Oh no, the helicopter's gone. How am I going to get up to heaven? How am I going to do this?"

No, God's coming for all of us. He's taking all of us home. And this leads to our fourth truth: "You must continue. You must continue." This is your imperative, this is your calling now. So we dealt with who we are now, we dealt with who we are in the present already, that was our second truth. But the passage in verse 23 closes, as Paul so often does, with an exhortation to endure. Verse 23, "If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been

proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister."

Okay, have you seen the Internet meme, "You have one job"? Some of you have seen us, "You have one job." Christian, by grace, you have one job. Continue. Continue. Keep going in the faith. Note that it is, verse 23, "in the faith." It's God's faith. It's not your faith, it's not post-modernity, it's not whatever I want it to be, it's not an Oprahfied pathway to God, which is whatever you see fit for it to be. No, it is the faith. It is the faith of this, the Word of God. You have to continue in this.

But note how simple that actually is: "Continue." Many days, believer, the victory is just enduring. Many days for you and me, it is a triumph not to give up. You understand this? Many days you are doing well by the grace of God if all you do is keep going, keep going.

This is a tough age. These are tough times. There's all sorts of ways for you and me to shift from the hope of the gospel that you heard – there in the middle of verse 23. It's really easy for us to shift. It's really easy for us to move away from the gospel and lock in our hope on something else. I'm seeing it among the younger generation, as I said a few minutes ago. I'm seeing a tremendous desire to make our nation Christian, to Christianize America.

It is totally right for Christians to be salt and light wherever they are; we have to be. And we want, we want goodness to flow in a country. We want people to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. We want a strong church. We want religious liberty. There's a lot of things we can talk about. We talked about some of them a month ago at the Christ Above Culture Conference. There's a lot we can say about Christians in the public square, okay.

But fundamentally, our hope is not Christianizing America. It's not even, according to Scripture, a revival in America. We can pray for that, it's a

good thing to pray for. But fundamentally, our hope is the gospel. That's the hope we hold. America may ebb and flow, get better, get worse stay the same; I have no idea. Nations fall over time; we know this from history and Scripture. But fundamentally, I do know what your calling is and my calling is, and it is to continue in the faith and not shift from the hope of the gospel. If you shift away from the gospel, Paul is implying you won't have hope. You think you will. No, "We're going to take back this. Oh, this is my new aim. I'm going to see this purpose realized."

What will happen is that eventually the steam will burn off, and the hope will disappear; it will vanish like mist. The only enduring hope there is for you and me is the hope of the gospel. No man can take that hope away from you. No one can steal that joy from you. It doesn't rise or fall. It is steady, stable, fixed hope.

So, Christian, don't let anyone come to you and rob your hope, your gospel hope. Pray for your community. Pray for your society. Be salt and light here. I'm not down on that; I want more of that, not less. Be conservative in how you think and vote and all sorts of other things. But fundamentally, keep your hope fixed on the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that will make you – to move back just a second – stable and steadfast, stable and steadfast.

We get really excited about the stories from church history of like George Whitefield the evangelist, Jonathan Edwards. Dr. Lawson loves those guys, I love those guys. Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon; yeah, great. Who throws a conference about some stable and steadfast Christian who lived 800 years ago. Who writes 800-page biographies of a persevering English Baptist in the English Reformation from 1572? Who has a 13-part podcast on all the podcast platforms, "link and subscribe," about a normal mom from Trinity Bible Church who just lives her faithful life day by day? It's not really what we get excited about, right?

Paul's excited about it. If, indeed, you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, it's actually a pretty simple calling, yes? Stability is way underrated. It's not exciting.

You think about, I don't know, basketball. I think about basketball a lot. Some would say too much, in fact, okay. But this is going to be a Dallas applicable analogy, okay, I promise you, sadly. This is going to be sad for us all, okay.

Every NBA team wants a superstar or two, okay, that's the modern NBA. It's not to build up an organization, usually; it's to swing for the fences, trade seven draft picks, and bring in what? A superstar. Yeah? And take your shot at an NBA championship. But you know what NBA teams need as much as a superstar? A glue guy. A guy who does the unspectacular hard work, anonymous tasks, doesn't ask for a lot of credit, doesn't make a huge salary; but when those guys leave organizations, championships leave, too.

It doesn't even have to be sports – hang with me, if necessary by your fingernails here as we think about life. It can be your workplace, right? There's a glue person, there's somebody who does the hard tasks and doesn't get a lot of credit for it. It can be drama, it can be band. it can be church, yeah? There's people here who serve who don't necessarily get the glory, people don't know their name. But you take them away from a church, you feel it.

It's like that in our society, right? We're down on men, we say men are toxic now. So men are receiving the message in a lot of cases; and men already have their own sin to battle. And so what's happening? Well, you're calling 911 in different parts of America. and who is showing up? Nobody.

Or, you know, you've got potholes the size of half your body on city roads. Well, why do you have potholes? It's not a magical mystery, it's because there's workers who aren't showing up. There's people who aren't doing the hard jobs anymore, because nobody wants to do the hard jobs. You've got to have glue guys for a society to work, for a church to work, and for a Christian to get all the way to glory. By God's grace, you've got to have stability and steadfastness. The gospel makes us steady. We're tempted to do, to be this, up and down, and up and down, all over the place, firing, all

of us are in our own way. We all stumble here, don't misunderstand me. But the gospel the Spirit works in us and steadies us.

Can I encourage you to embrace the steadifying effect – I think I just made up a word – of the gospel. Embrace the steadiness, embrace the stability of the gospel. The gospel makes us dependable. The gospel makes us calm. The gospel comes to us. We are emotionally out of order, and I don't just mean at the moment of conversion. I mean, throughout our lives things happen to us. We go through hard seasons. Satan attacks us – afflictions, trials, hardships. Things get out of whack for believers I'm saying, and you need a reintroduction to the gospel and a representation of grace; and God will rewire you again, and help you and calm you. And we desperately need that as Christians today. We need more stable and steady Christians. We need less fast twitch, firing off at all moments Christians, and we need more stable, steady, solid, servant-hearted, dependable Christians.

That's what Paul says at the end of this verse. He says about the gospel, "and of which I, Paul, became a minister." See that at the end of verse 23? In the Greek it's, "became a *diakonos*, became a servant." He was just a stable, steady servant of the gospel. That's his very identity. "Paul, who are you? What's your long CV? What's your list of awards? Which societies do you belong to?" Basically, a very impressive man in earthly terms. But all he says about himself toward the end of his life is, "I'm a servant. I'm just a servant of the gospel. That's all I do. I just try to be steady and stable and get the job done."

I have one job; Christian, you have one job: by God's grace, through much prayer by asking God for help, God will help you be steady in unsteady times. You need this more than you know. You need steadiness and stability more than you feel. You need to go back to basics in these days, and you need to embrace the disciplines of grace.

People around us are seeing this, aren't they/ You're seeing people on Instagram share their daily routine, or YouTube. People now make a lot of money basically telling other people they make their bed in the morning,

they brush their teeth. There's YouTube videos of people brushing their teeth. I'm shifting careers to toothbrushing YouTube personality, okay. That's a good one if you can get it. And then like making the bed, and blending a smoothie and these sorts of things, and it's like what is missing from American society that people are having two million views on "My daily 15-minute routine"?

I'm not mocking people around me, it is funny; but the reality is people have lost stability and steadiness, and that – hear me again – that is what the gospel brings, and that is what you need to embrace. You don't want to be like this, you want to be steady, steadfast, have your eyes fixed on God, drink deeply from the Word of God, be regular in prayer, serve your church. These things are not going to read justify you after you have a tough conversation with a loved one. That's not why we do them. They glorify God, they honor God, they show your love for God, and they help you be fixed on the hope of the gospel.

We can't give up. We have such a great hope before us. Christian, if you gave up in your life, it would be like running a marathon for 26 miles and giving up at the 0.2 part. That is always the hardest part of your workout, yes, or at least it often is for me, the end. I can see the finish. I have nightmare flashbacks to high school cross country in eastern Maine when I was within 200 yards of finishing third in the Eastern Maine Class D boys regional cross-country meet, and I faltered. I was slow. I closed slow, and I ended up fifth. I'm glad I could work this through with you. By the way, it's my birthday. Can I share that with you? It's my birthday. I got to preach here on my birthday. Thank you for that. Oh, wow. Thank you. Are you clapping for the fifth place finish, Eastern Maine – okay. You're very kind to me. You don't want to falter when the tape is in view. Don't falter, keep on running.

So, four concluding applications for us this morning, four concluding applications based on what we have covered. First, remember who you were. Remember who you were: a slave to sin, lost, under wrath, deserving God's judgment. And if you are there now, if you're not a believer, if you're not sure that you know the Lord Jesus Christ, if your sins are not forgiven,

today is the day to cry out to God for forgiveness and say, "God, forgive me; I'm such a great sinner. I can't solve this problem, I have no solution, I have no soap to cleanse my soul. I need Christ. I claim the blood of Christ as my forgiveness. I claim the hope of the resurrection as my hope," run to Jesus today; and then you too will be remembering who you were.

As a Christian, "Remember who you were." You're not that now. You're not what you used to be. That's encouraging. Second, "Remember who you are now. Remember who you are." When the laughing gas wears off, remember that you are reconciled to God, and no one can unreconcile you. Your salvation will not be lost. The devil will not be able to take it from you. Your own sin, your own failure, which is real, will not unsave you. You are now a child of God, and you always will be.

Remember who you are, Christian. Remember that when temptation pops up on your phone or your computer or in social settings. Remember: "Wait. Wait, wait, wait, wait. I'm not that, I'm a Christian. Okay. God, give me strength to endure, to continue."

Third, "Remember who you will be." Remember who you're going to be on the last day; you're headed there. It's the most certain thing in your life. It's not a tentative prospect, you are certainly going to be glorified on the last day. You're going to be spotless. You're going to be unblemished. You're positionally saved already. But on the last day, all sin, all trace of evil will be washed completely from you, and you will be presented blameless, spotless, holy before God. That is where you're going. That is your future. You don't know the future of your community, your family, your nation, your world in terms of a day by day knowledge; but you know who you're going to be, and that shapes your every minute. You're going to be spotless. This is good news. It's not just good news when you get saved, it's good news all the way through, and it's the greatest news on the last day when you are before God, and God does not condemn you, but welcomes you by His grace.

Fourth and finally, "Remember who you must now strive to be. Remember who you must now strive to be." By God's grace, embrace gospel stability and steadfast. Continue. Don't let the enemy knock you off course. Stop letting the world shape you. Stop living passively. Stop letting evil forces act on you.

In every area of your life, cry out to God and ask Him to change you and give you grace. You need to stop looking at pornography. You need to stop drifting in your marriage. You need to stop not having a devotional walk with God. You need to stop not nurturing your marriage. It's hard work for all of us. You need to stop not having a devotional life. You've got to reject the passivity of this world, which is teaching you that you're just a passive being, and you can't do anything, and nothing good can happen to you, and all you can do is just gratify your appetites and sit on the couch. You can't work, you can't contribute, you can't serve a church. It's all a satanic lie. It's a lie.

You've got to reject all of that, Christian, and you've got to embrace the grace of God, and you've got to ask God to help you think about all of your life and where you're just letting, honestly, evil and the enemy have its way with you, and you've got to punch back against the darkness by the grace of God; and God will help you do that. And you will remember as you do so who you are. God will continually through His Spirit assure you that you are His. Jesus is with you now, and Jesus will escort you all the way to glory. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, please help us to do this. Please help us to continue in the faith. We're not going to be able to do this in our own strength, God; we're the weak one, You're the strong one. Help us to endure. Help us to withstand evil. Help us to fight back against temptation. Help us to confess sin. Help us to be quick to ask forgiveness. It's so hard for all of us. But help us to grow in that. Help us to love Your Word, to love prayer, to love serving the church.

I pray your blessing upon this church. I pray You only continue to pour out grace upon Trinity. I pray that it continues to be a light in Dallas. Even as You are removing the lampstand of other churches in the Dallas area, I pray that this church would only grow and strengthen, because it stands upon the Word. I pray that you would save sinners. I pray this morning that those who have come who do not know Christ would be saved. I pray You'd work in their heart. I pray that you would strengthen Christians who are tempted right now to not continue to give up, to not endure, to lose their gospel hope. I pray that You would keep their eyes fixed upon Jesus Christ, in His strong and invincible name we pray. Amen.